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## Introduction

"Hi, I am Anne. My manager Tom, wants me to work more closely with Robert, our newest analyst on the team. Tom and I both noticed that Robert is capable of doing much better work than he is demonstrating. I'll bet this course will help me build the skills I need to help Robert become a real team member.

If this course helps someone like me, I know it will help you too."



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## **Feedback Introduction**

If your thoughts are somewhat negative about receiving constructive feedback, then you may have similar thoughts about giving feedback.

For many of us, constructive feedback can have a negative association. As a result, it can be challenging to give and receive feedback well.



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## A Fresh Look

With this course, we are making a conscious decision to focus on giving and receiving feedback about things that are off-track or are difficult.

Today will be a fresh look at constructive feedback. You will explore ways constructive feedback can help in your day-to-day work environment.



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# **New and Different Things**

What we do in state service increasingly impacts the work of others and vice versa. At the same time, the pace of change means we find ourselves doing new and different things, often without the time we would like to spend learning how to do these things well.

Do we ever take the time to think about the long-term effects of what we do?



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This completes the Introduction chapter of this training course. Click on the Chapter Complete button below to continue on to the next chapter.

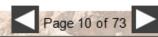
Complete Chapter



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## Constructive Feedback Builds

Without realizing it, we may do things that make it harder for other people to do their jobs well. When nothing is said or if something is said or received the wrong way, we all lose.

Well-delivered and well-received constructive feedback, from any source, can open the door to creating work environments of openness, mutual respect, creative problem-solving and learning.



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# **Define Constructive Feedback**

### Constructive Feedback is:

- the return of information about the result of a process.
- information-specific, issue-focused and based on observations.
- given to improve a process.



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## **Points To Remember:**

- . Sometimes people give feedback without having all the facts.
- Feedback is tied to each experience.
- . The giver and receiver may both feel negative about the feedback.

It takes a lot of skill and courage to give and receive constructive feedback. These can be difficult conversations.

We will now explore some ideas associated with such conversations that will help us discover the ideas many people have about giving and receiving feedback.



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## Two Varieties of Feedback

Constructive feedback is information-specific, issue-focused and based on observations. It comes in two varieties:

- Positive feedback is news or input to an employee about an effort well done.
- Negative feedback is news to an employee about an effort that needs improvement. It does not imply a terrible performance, but rather a performance in which the outcomes delivered should be better. Therefore, negative is not a negative word in this instance.



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# **Interpersonal Skill**

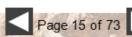
Giving feedback is one of the most important interpersonal skills for a manager. The purpose of constructive feedback is to provide information that will contribute to improvements and create better results. For feedback to be useful it has to be actionable, otherwise it's likely that the situation or behavior will recur.

Whenever you're giving feedback, keep in mind that you'll probably have an ongoing relationship with this person, so use your feedback to reinforce good relations.



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# **Beneficial Results**

Offering constructive feedback can seem like a daunting task.

However, when you approach the task with good intentions, rather than criticism and judgment, you create positive input with beneficial results.



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## **Review 1**

Feedback is a way to let people know how effective they are in what they are trying to accomplish or how they affect you. It provides a way for people to learn how they affect the world around them and it helps us to become more effective. At its core, constructive feedback is merely information.

Do you believe this definition sounds like giving and receiving constructive feedback is pretty simple and straight-forward?



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## Anne's Review

"I need to review to make sure that I'm getting this.

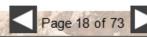
- I'll use constructive feedback on a day-to-day basis to improve our work environment.
- Well-delivered and well-received feedback can create openness, mutual respect, creative problem-solving and learning.
- I need skill and courage to deliver constructive feedback which is information specific, issue-focused and based on observation.
- So when I see a behavior or task that requires improvement, I'll share it with Robert as soon as I can.
- The purpose of constructive feedback is to provide information that will contribute to improvements and create better results.
- . I'll use constructive feedback to reinforce good relations."



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# Others' Perspectives

We naturally tend to go through life acting and speaking from our own experiences, values and perspectives. This behavior can add to or even create difficulties in communication.

Sometimes, the hardest thing for us to do during a conversation is to remove the focus from ourselves. We often express our opinions, offer recommendations, focus on our wants and so on, instead of really listening to and understanding the needs, wants or perspectives of others.



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# **Perspectives Impact Feedback**

For us to effectively give and receive feedback, its important to first understand how perspectives impact feedback.

When we give or receive feedback, it can be difficult to listen to ideas, values, approaches and practices that are different from our own.

Do you think there are any benefits or downfalls to focusing mostly on ourselves i.e., our own ideas, values, approaches and practices during feedback situations?



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# **Benefits of Focusing on Ourselves**

- We get what we want.
- It feels good when people listen to us.
- We like to be seen as "in charge."
- People who are heard, get respect, get promoted, etc.
- It is easier than trying to please everyone.
- · People need someone to follow some people are leaders and some are followers - the leaders get heard.
- . If you don't speak up, don't make a decision or set a course of action, sometimes no one will.



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# **Downfalls of Focusing on Ourselves**

- You don't get as many perspectives.
- · You don't learn from people around you.
- · You may not make as many "friends."
- People won't like talking to you.
- · You may not have the best idea or all of the information.
- It's rude.
- · You may not make the best decision.
- People won't want to do what you want because they are not included in making the decision.
- You won't get the buy-in from others on decisions and implementation plans.



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## **Shift The Focus**

It is okay if we have more downfalls than we have benefits. The point is that it is better to communicate from many perspectives.

Let's look at how shifting focus can help us overcome problems in how we communicate and interact.



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# A Story About Your Life

Think of a good story about your life - something that excites you or makes you feel proud, happy or important. It could be a favorite vacation, a great accomplishment that you or your team realized, the best job you've ever had or the best place where you've ever lived.

Write this short "story" on a blank sheet of paper. However, you are not to use the words:

- "|"
- "My"
- · "He or She"

Find a way to communicate without using these words.

### Then write:

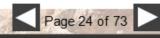
- · Why you chose this story
- · Why it is interesting or important
- · Other significant details



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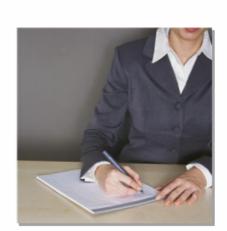
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# **More Writing**

Answer these questions for yourself:

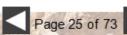
- · Was that difficult? Why? Why not?
- Were you able to get all of your points across that you wanted to? If yes, how did you do it? If no, why not?
- How uncomfortable was it for you not to express directly what you felt or thought about something?
- Did you bring out different points and highlight other people and things since you could not focus on yourself?
- · What were you able to say instead?
- · What was your focus?
- Could changing our perspective and way of speaking during a feedback discussion change the outcome of the conversation? How?

Again, on your piece of paper, write on what needs to happen in order to focus on something other than your own perspectives during a conversation.



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## **Shift The Focus**

Shifting the focus to another person is hard to do at first. It can feel uncomfortable. You may feel that you can't really say what you are thinking; however, shifting the focus allows you to look at the topic through "new eyes." It allows you to see other points of view that could be valuable to the outcome.

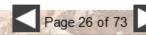
This style of communication also allows others to be included. Sharing the conversation takes the pressure off and allows others to fill in the gaps. Everyone participates, everyone learns and everyone helps create the solutions or outcome.



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## **Feedback With Coworkers**

When we think of constructive feedback, we often think of a conversation between a leader and the people whose performance that leader manages.

However, feedback is also valuable between co-workers. Let's name some of the feedback opportunities we have at work.

Think of and identify as many feedback opportunities as possible. Avoid using people's names. Focus on the issues.



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# Ask yourself these questions:

- What are the challenges in some of the opportunities?
- · What are the benefits to giving constructive feedback effectively?
- What might happen if you withhold constructive feedback?
- · Can you think of the advantages to feeling confident enough to give constructive feedback in any situation?

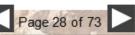


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# **Review 2**

- At its core, constructive feedback is merely information.
- · We all have ideas about feedback conversations (some are negative, some are positive).
- Since we approach life from our own perspectives, our behavior can add to or create difficulties in communication.
- Understanding others' perspectives can help us overcome communication problems.
- There are lots of opportunities at work to provide feedback.





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## Let's Ask Anne

"So, I need to listen to and understand the perspectives of others.

It is better to communicate from many perspectives.

I will need to remove myself from the feedback discussion.

Constructive feedback is good for everyone.

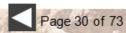
Yes, I am getting this now."

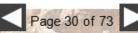


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# **Feedback Opportunities Handout**

Now that you've had a chance to identify some feedback opportunities, it is time to discover exactly how to go about giving and receiving constructive feedback. We will begin with the giving and then move on to the receiving.

Have you wondered how effective you currently are at giving constructive feedback?

Have you wondered how other people would evaluate you at giving constructive feedback?

Click here to open and print the Feedback Opportunities Handout.

- · Read each statement.
- Check the box that best describes how you think others would evaluate you in giving constructive feedback. The choices are: Almost Always, Sometimes and Almost Never.

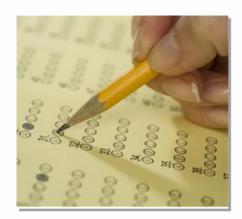




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## **Handout Instructions**

- Total the number of check marks in each column at the bottom of the assessment.
- . Did you notice the far left column that lists steps 1 to 5?
- You will receive more information about these steps after you score your assessment.
- Each of the items on the assessment relate to the different steps in the Giving Constructive Feedback process.
- Items 1-10 for Steps 1-3 are critical to building an environment of openness, respect and mutual trust.
- Items 11-20 for Steps 4 and 5 help you encourage the other person's involvement and move the conversation toward finding solutions.



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## **Handout Instructions**

Let's take a close look at your completed assessment.

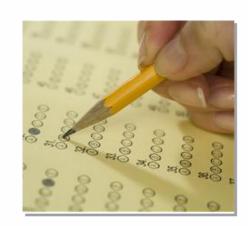
Almost Always indicates an overall area of strength. Sometimes indicates an opportunity to strengthen your skills.

Almost Never indicates areas that need attention right away.

For items 1-10, write down your strengths by identifying the items you checked Almost Always.

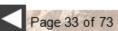
Now identify and write the skills you should strengthen. These are the items you checked Almost Never.

You will want to target opportunities in the 'Sometimes' and 'Almost Never' categories to fine-tune your skills.



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# **Five Steps**

In this section of our computer-based-training, we will cover the Five Steps to Giving Constructive Feedback.

The five steps are:

STEP 1: Convey your positive intent.

STEP 2: Describe specifically what you observed.

STEP 3: State the impact of the behavior or action.

STEP 4: Ask the other person to respond.

STEP 5: Focus the discussion on solutions.



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# Step 1: Convey your positive intent.

### Examples:

### Mentally prepare to give feedback.

Even if you need to give immediate feedback, you can take a second to focus on the positive outcome you seek. Having a clear, constructive purpose will help you convey a sense of objectivity and respect.

### Consider the timing.

In addition to making sure that you are clear about your purpose in giving feedback, choose a time when the other person is likely to be receptive to what you have to say. Avoid times when other people are present or when the person is busy, tired or upset.



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# Step 1: Convey your positive intent.

Briefly state what you would like to cover. Useful phrases include:

- . "I have some thoughts about..."
- · "Could we discuss..."
- · "I have a concern about..."
- · "Let's take a look at..."



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# Step 1: Convey your positive intent.

Express a common goal.

Expressing a common goal as part of your statement helps the person understand the positive results of listening to and acting on the feedback. It will also reduce the chance that you will come across as placing blame. Common goals may be as simple as meeting deadlines, improving coordination or making more effective use of time.

### Examples:

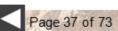
"Donald, we need to meet this project deadline and we're running late. Let's take a look at what we can do."

"Sabrina, could we discuss the new processing procedures? I'm concerned that these changes aren't helping us meet our goal of serving customers faster."



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## Anne

"You'll be writing about the feedback opportunity you identified on another sheet of paper.

I'll write about the feedback opportunity I listed for Robert. Please proceed to the next screen to see what I wrote in my journal."



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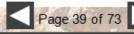


Robert, do you have a minute to talk about our monthly report?



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# **Step 1 Review**

Conveying a positive intent will make it easier for the other person to hear and listen to your feedback.

- · Mentally prepare
- · Consider the timing
- · Briefly state what you would like to cover
- · Express a common goal

Remember that when you express a common goal, you convey a positive intent.



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# Step 2: Describe specifically what you observed.

### Examples

### Be Specific

Use facts or figures whenever possible.

### Examples:

- "In going over the data, I found that we are 11 records short."
- "The turnaround time is now up to a day and a half late."

### Be brief and to the point

The most effective feedback gets to the significant part quickly.

### Examples:

- "Some of the tools are in the wrong drawer."
- "The computer files are not organized the way that we agreed."



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# Step 2: Describe specifically what you observed.

Focus on the behavior or action, not on the person.

Avoid using the word *you*. It puts people on the defensive.

Instead of saying: "You didn't organize the computer files the way that we agreed."

<u>Do say</u>: "The computer files are not organized the way that we agreed."

Limit your feedback to one behavior or action.

Some people have a tendency to store up feedback and cover many topics at once. This practice is commonly known as "gunny-sacking." The result is usually a defensive response from the person receiving the feedback.

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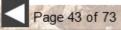


You said you started the report on Monday. We need it finished by next Wednesday. What figures can I gather for you that you have not recorded yet?



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# **Step 2 Review**

For feedback to be effective, the other person needs to believe that what you say is real and valid.

- · Be specific
- · Be brief and to the point
- · Focus on the behavior or action
- · Limit your feedback to ONE behavior or action

This is more likely to happen when your comments are specific and concrete. By simply stating the facts without judgment or interpretation, you establish a common ground on which both you and the other person can build a solution.

Remember to focus on the behavior or action, not on the person.



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# Step 3: State the impact of the behavior or action.

Link the behavior or action to important business needs or challenges.

Explain the impact of the behavior or action on such things as:

- · Business plans or goals
- Customer satisfaction
- Organization-wide systems
- Costs or cycle time
- The amount of rework
- Important reports or measurements



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# Step 3: State the impact of the behavior or action.

State only one or two of the most significant consequences.

Select only the most important consequences or your feedback may be viewed as an attack rather than as information offered in a supportive manner.

### Maintain an objective tone.

Describing the negative consequences of an action or behavior can cause you to slip into an emotional state. If this is a potential problem for you, practice ahead of time so you can describe the situation in a straightforward manner.



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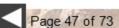


Our team is measured on the timeliness of this report, Robert. It is delivered to the Governor's Office. If we're late, we look bad and the agency looks bad. I don't like looking bad, Robert.



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# Step 4: Ask the recipient to respond.

Invite the other person to respond.

There are several ways to invite a response.

One is simply to complete what you are saying and then pause. Look the person in the eye to indicate that you are waiting for a response.

Another way is to ask an open-ended question such as:

- · "What do you think?"
- · "What is your view of the situation?"
- · "Tell me, what are your thoughts?"
- "How do you see things?"



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# Step 4: Ask the recipient to respond.

### Listen objectively to the other person's response.

Listening to the other person's response will enable you to determine what to do next. If you have given your feedback objectively, the chances are that you will receive an objective response.

### Summarize the other person's key points.

Summarizing the recipient's point of view often diffuses a negative situation and keeps the door to communication open. By listening and summarizing, you are not necessarily agreeing with the other person, but you are showing respect for his or her viewpoint.



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# **Step 4 Review**

Ask the other person (recipient) to respond.

- · Invite the person to respond.
- · Listen objectively to the other person's response.
- · Summarize the person's key points.

Since feedback is about opening doors, you need to find out what the other person thinks. Unless you ask for a response, you run the risk of a one-sided conversation that does not lead to problem-solving or mutual learning. Asking for a response also helps to keep the discussion objective.

Remember to summarize the other person's key points.



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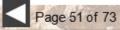


So, Robert, what's your take on all of this?



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# Step 5: Focus the discussion on solutions.

### Determine and agree upon what to do next.

At this point in the conversation, you will need to make a judgement based on the person's response during Step 4.

In some cases, you may have to revisit earlier steps to establish the need for action.

In other cases, you can move ahead to problem-solving or other follow-up actions.



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# **Step 5: Focus the discussion on solutions.**

### Ask for the specific help or change that you seek.

In giving feedback, the reality is that you want to see the other person make some kind of change. State your expectations so the person will know what to do next time.

### Examples:

- "Next time will you...?"
- · "We could provide the customer with quicker service if you..."
- . "A win-win solution here would be if you..."



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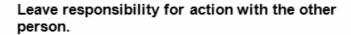


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# Step 5: Focus the discussion on solutions.

If you are making suggestions, avoid coming across as an expert.

Anytime you offer alternatives, you are explaining how you, yourself, might approach the problem. Especially in technical areas, you may not know enough about what goes on behind the scenes to supply the perfect solution.



In giving constructive feedback, you will get the best results if you simply describe what is not working and allow the other person to figure out the details. This approach is essential to building accountability.



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# **Step 5: Focus the discussion on solutions.**

### Manage your own expectations.

Using the 5 steps, even perfectly, will not magically transform the other person into the supervisor, subordinate or peer of your dreams. However, it will help open a door to problem- solving and mutual learning.



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# Step 5 Review

Focusing this discussion away from problems and toward solutions not only leads to problem-solving and mutual learning, but also ensures an objective exchange of dialogue.

- · Determine and agree upon what to do next.
- · Ask for the specific help or change you seek.
- When making suggestions, avoid sounding like an expert.
- Leave responsibility for action with the other person.
- Manage your own expectations.

The main point of Step 5 is to determine and agree upon what to do next.



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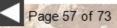
I would like to start the report 2 weeks before it is due and perform no other tasks during that period of time. Is that okay with you, Anne?





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# **Giving Feedback Review**

Now let's see how much you remember about the five steps in giving constructive feedback.

On the following page, there is a matching exercise. Match each of the 'Steps in Giving Feedback' in the left column with the correct 'Feedback Characteristic' in the right column.

Drag the correct letter from the right column to its corresponding Step in the left column.



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# **Matching Summary**

Steps in Giving Feedback

Convey positive intent. \_\_\_\_\_

Describe what was observed. \_\_\_\_

State the impact of the behavior or action.

Ask the other person to respond.

Focus on solutions.

Feedback Characteristics

Maintain an objective tone.

Summarize the other person's key points.

Express a common goal.

Manage your expectations.

Focus on the behavior, not on the person.

Click, hold, and drag the items in the right column to match the items in the left column.

Submit Answer

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# **Chapter Summary**

At work, we often have written material to help us remember what happened in a particular meeting or in completing our every day tasks. This is very valuable.

However, if we become too dependent on written material, we may stop listening to one another or we may stop being careful to be clear when we speak. We could miss some important information or nuance.

Therefore, listening techniques are important in our every day business interactions. Our chapter on Receiving Constructive Feedback begins as the next chapter in this course.



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# **Receiving Constructive Feedback**

In this section of our computer-based-training, we will cover Receiving Constructive Feedback.

Receiving constructive feedback almost always involves some discomfort. Each of us needs to make an extra effort to hear the other person out. We will view techniques that will help you respond constructively in feedback situations whether you think the feedback is justified or



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# **Foundation Techniques**

Remember that the techniques, listed below, are the foundational techniques in receiving feedback. These techniques are:

- · Focus on the content, not on the person (the giving person cares; look for the "nugget of wisdom").
- · Listen calmly and attentively (get the complete picture; tune in fully; monitor your own negative reactions).
- Clarify the feedback (ask a few key questions to ensure you understand; do not antagonize the person).





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# **Additional Techniques**

Remember that the techniques, shown below, may be used in any order and as often as it makes sense. These techniques are:

- · Acknowledge the other person's concerns. (Show you understand the point of view; point out common goals; show your willingness for mutual problem-solving.)
- Avoid defending or over-explaining. (Do correct inaccuracies; always sort out what you will say before speaking.)
- Welcome suggestions. (Focus on the future; find at least one thing you can do differently to improve.)



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# **After Receiving Feedback**

Remember to use the following techniques after you receive the feedback. These techniques are:

- · Ask for feedback regularly.
- . If in doubt about the merit of the feedback, check with others.
- Evaluate feedback you receive and decide what changes you can make.
- Let the feedback giver know when you implement changes that stem from the feedback given to you.





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# **Feedback Considerations**

Some feedback situations are more challenging than others. Some people experience feedback as pure criticism and don't want to hear it. Others only want to hear praise. There are those who want feedback and even seek it out. It comes down to whether you believe feedback will harm vou or benefit vou.

The following screens offer you considerations to make before giving feedback.



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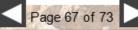
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## 1. Assess the situation

- . Determine what is at stake. Weigh the cost of not giving the feedback against the possible discomfort or risk of giving it.
- . If possible, find out how the person usually responds to feedback. Estimate the likelihood of a favorable response and your own skills for handling an unfavorable response.
- . If you believe that giving this feedback might be a career-limiting move, don't give it. However, do be honest and ask yourself: "Am I jumping to conclusions about the outcome to avoid an uncomfortable situation?'



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# 2. Do your homework

- Determine the best time and format in which to convey your information.
- Be sure you have your facts in order.
- Find out how this issue fits in with other issues the person deals with on a daily basis.
- Plan what you want to say; rehearse if necessary.
- Visualize yourself remaining calm and objective when giving the feedback.



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# 3. View the situation as a learning opportunity

- Deliver the feedback as best you can.
- Listen carefully to the reply and acknowledge any new information or perspective the person provides.
- Learn something that will make it easier to give feedback to this person the next time.



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# 4. Show your team spirit

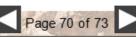
- · Build a name for yourself as a problem-solver.
- · Show your willingness to explore and carry out possible solutions.
- · Focus on improving performance today; not on rehashing yesterday's mistakes.



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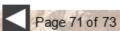


Well Robert, we turned that report in on time. Thank you; great job. Did anyone complain about you not being available to provide assistance to them?



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# **Chapter Summary**

To reinforce the concepts you learned today, it is important to plan how to use these skills in your work. You now have the opportunity to think about what you learned and identify those skills that you will apply immediately.

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